



PRESS RELEASE

Governor Baker Signs Bipartisan Legislation to Provide Flexibility to School Districts Teaching English Language Learners

An Act relative to Language Opportunity for Our Kids provides school districts ability to tailor programs for English Language Learners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Governor Charlie Baker | Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

James Peyser, Education Secretary

Robert A. DeLeo, House Speaker

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BOSTON — Today, Governor Charlie Baker signed [*An Act Relative to Language Opportunity for Our Kids \(LOOK\)*](#) at the State House, giving school districts more flexibility in how they teach students who are English language learners, while maintaining accountability for timely and effective English acquisition.

The new law does not overturn the existing requirement that schools teach all students in English as rapidly as possible. Rather, it gives school districts flexibility to choose a research-based teaching method other than Sheltered English Immersion to help them develop their English language skills, after review and approval by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The review is not intended to restrict districts' prerogatives, but to enable the state to fulfill its legal obligations to ensure English Language Learners receive services to which they are entitled to under state and federal law.

"This legislation preserves an existing approach that works well for many students, while providing school districts with the opportunity to adopt alternative, credible ways to teach English that may be more beneficial for certain students," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "We are pleased to have worked with the Legislature to pass this bill to keep providing a quality education for students from all backgrounds."

"While the bill provides districts with new flexibilities, we will ensure programs for English language learners remain rigorous, properly staffed, and regularly evaluated," **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito said**.

"Parents in several communities will have opportunities to participate on local advisory committees and have more direct input into the education of their children."

The new law also raises expectations for data collection and program evaluations, to ensure greater transparency and accountability, while providing a stronger basis for improvement. It creates parent advisory committees at schools with a high concentration of English language learners, and gives parents input into their children's program.

"Every student has unique needs and it is our obligation to foster an environment where they are afforded an education tailored to them," **said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop)**. "Massachusetts' education system is the best in the nation, and I believe that this law will enhance our standing while ensuring that education is indeed, the great equalizer."

"Allowing parents and local school districts the flexibility to choose the most effective programs to cater to the specific needs of their students is not only good public policy but also what is best for our students to be successful," **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst)**. "We live in a global community

and we must be able to adapt to the changing needs of our communities in a thoughtful and constructive way. This bill achieves that goal.”

“Over the past six years the state undertook a comprehensive strategy for raising standards, training teachers, and evaluating program quality. As a result of these efforts, many students are building their English language skills at a faster pace,” **Secretary of Education James Peyser said.** “Although Sheltered English Immersion is succeeding for many students, it is not succeeding for all students. English language learners are not all the same.”

Under the law, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will also develop “seals of bi-literacy” for high school diplomas to recognize students who are proficient in English and another language.

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